

REVELATION

Chapter 22

The River of Life

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. ⁶ The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”

22:1-5 In Rev 22:1–5 John sees another depiction of the new heaven and earth, this time reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. Though Eden itself is not explicitly mentioned, “the river of the water of life” (22:1) and especially “the tree of life” (22:2) are obvious allusions to the primeval paradise. (CC p. 623)

The two dominant images here—the river and the tree—also figure prominently in the creation (Gn. 2:9–17; 3:1–7). Their reappearance here helps show that the end will be like the beginning, only better. (TLSB)

22:1 RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE – Throughout John’s writings, water serves as a symbol of eternal life (cf Jn 3:5; 4:14). Those living in God’s holy city will have unimpeded and perpetual access to this life-giving water. In this world, Baptism serves this function. (TLSB)

The one who “showed to” John “the river of the water of life” (22:1) is the same angel who has been attending him throughout the vision of the End (17:1–22:5). This angel is “one of the seven angels who had the seven censers” (21:9; cf. 17:1). This commentary also identifies these seven angels with the censers (15:1, 6–7; 16:1–21) as the seven angels of the seven churches. (CC p. 623)

John is shown “the river of the water of life” which is so pure that it is “clear as crystal” (22:1). In the Garden of Eden a river flowed which watered Eden and then became the source of four rivers which watered different regions of the earth (Gen 2:10–14). Would John on reflection be reminded of this river which watered Eden in its state of perfection? Here in Rev 22:1 the river is called “the water of life,” which is best understood as a symbol of that life which God alone

can grant and sustain. In Jn 4:10–14 Jesus speaks of the “living water” (ὕδωρ ζῶν) which he gives and which, when received, becomes “a spring of water which wells up into eternal life” (πηγή ὕδατος ἀλλομένου εἰς ζῶν αἰώνιον). (CC pp. 623-624)

A similar use of a river as a symbol of life flowing from God is found in Ezekiel. After the prophet had seen in a vision a detailed description of the end-time temple (Ezek 40:1–46:24), he sees a renewed and transformed creation with a river of water flowing out from the temple, bringing life to creatures and furnishing food for people (Ezek 47:1–12). As the river flows it wells up, as it were, and becomes greater in depth (Ezek 47:3–5). When it empties into the Dead Sea, “the waters are healed” (Ezek 47:8); it rejuvenates that sea so that its waters sustain fish and other wildlife (Ezek 47:8–9). Ezekiel also sees fruit trees growing on both banks of the river (Ezek 47:7, 12; cf. Rev 22:2). The leaves of the trees never wither, and every month the trees bear fruit (Ezek 47:12). The leaves are for “healing” (Ezek 47:12), as are those in Rev 22:2. This river has such ability to create and sustain life because it flows from the temple of God (Ezek 47:12). (CC p. 624)

A brief reference is made to such a “river” in Zech 14:8. On the “day of Yahweh” (Zech 14:1) “living water [דִּי־חַיִּים; LXX: ὕδωρ ζῶν] will flow from Jerusalem” (Zech 14:8). And Joel says that in the day that the Lord will judge the nations (Joel 3:2 [MT 4:2]), “a spring will flow from the house of Yahweh” as the mountains drop new wine and the hills flow with milk (Joel 3:18 [MT 4:18]). While in Ezekiel and Joel the river flows from the temple and in Zechariah from Jerusalem, in Rev 22:1 it flows from “the throne of God and of the Lamb” in the new Jerusalem. The temple is no longer there, for God and the Lamb are the temple in the new heaven and earth (21:22). (CC p. 624)

Since pure physical water flowed freely in the Garden of Eden to water the earth and thus sustain and renew earthly life, such a river could easily be used pictorially for that spiritual force which flows from God to create and sustain the faith and spiritual life of his people. The fact that in Ezek 47:1–12 this water comes from the temple indicates that it is through God’s covenantal presence in his Word and in the forgiveness of sins provided by divinely ordained sacrifice, which was fulfilled in Christ, that this saving power flows from God. That it also comes from Jerusalem (Zech 14:8) suggests that because of the salvation brought about in Zion, this spiritual power would go forth from the holy city. “The river of the water of life” here in Rev 22:1 refers to the spiritual power of God and of the Lamb that will sustain forever the communal life of God’s people with him in the new heaven and earth. It also indicates that all physical life will also be richly supplied by pure natural water as in the first Eden. (CC p. 625)

22:2 DOWN THE MIDDLE – The river and tree are no longer set in a garden, but a city. (TLSB)

tree of life. See Ge 2:9; 3:22; Eze 47:12. (CSB)

Because of what Christ accomplished on another tree—the cross of Calvary—God’s people will again have free access to this tree; its fruit bestows immortality. For the present, the Holy Supper serves this function. (TLSB)

“In between her [the city’s] main street and the river, on this side and on that, is the tree of life” (Rev 22:2). The picture that these words present is of “a beautiful park running through the entire city which has the avenue on one side and the crystalline river on the other.” Between the river and the main street in this paradise is “the tree of life.” If one stands “on this side” (the street side), he sees the tree, and if one stands “on that” side (the side of the river), he also sees the tree. (CC p. 625)

“The tree of life” first appears in Gen 2:9. Among the many trees God created, he made in the middle of the Garden of Eden “the tree of life” and “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Because Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge in disobedience to God’s command (Gen 2:16–17; 3:2–11), they were driven from the garden (Gen 3:22–24). The Scriptures do not reveal exactly what role “the tree of life” would have played if Adam and Eve had not sinned. Most likely it represented the source and sustainer of true life, God the Creator. Perhaps if Adam had not sinned by eating of the tree of knowledge but instead had chosen to eat of “the tree of life,” he would have lived forever by the power of the gracious and loving God who had created him and who would always provide for him through God’s creation. But once man sinned, God did not allow him to eat from “the tree of life,” for death was now his future and not life (Gen 3:22). (CC p. 625)

Other OT passages refer to “the tree of life” as the one true source of life. In Proverbs the description of “wisdom” (Prov 3:13) includes the affirmation “she is a tree of life for those who take hold of her, and those who grasp her are blessed” (Prov 3:18). Prov 11:30 promises that “a fruit of a righteous person is a tree of life.” According to Prov 13:12, “a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” In Ezek 47:1–12, after the vision of the end-time temple (Ezek 40:1–46:24), the prophet saw trees on each side of the river which flowed from the temple (Ezek 47:7). These trees never ceased bearing fruit; the leaves would never wither and would be for healing (Ezek 47:12). While Ezekiel does not call these trees “the tree of life,” they have the same function as “the tree of life” here in Rev 22:2, and so they seem to serve as a prophetic illustration of it. (CC p. 626)

In pseudepigraphal literature the tree of life appears, especially in eschatological visions. For example, in 1 Enoch 24:1–25:7 it is the most fragrant of all the trees (24:4) and it is beautiful and magnificent in appearance (24:5). No human being can touch it until after the judgment, for it is reserved for the righteous, and the elect of God will partake of its “fruit for life” (25:4–5). In 2 Enoch 8:4 “it covers the whole of Paradise,” and it contains “something of every orchard tree and of every

fruit.” And in 4 Ezra 8:52 when “Paradise is opened” the tree of life will be “planted.” (CC p. 626)

Because of the description of the tree being on both sides of the river or between the river and the main street, the references to “the tree of life” in Ezek 47:7, 12 and in Rev 22:1–2 suggest that “tree” (Υῦ; ξύλον) is used in a collective sense. The fact that in Rev 22:2 (and also in 2:7; 22:14, 19) ξύλον is used for the “tree” of life supports this collective understanding, for ξύλον literally means “wood” (cf. Lk 22:52; 1 Cor 3:12; Rev 18:12). The more common word for “tree” is δένδρον. That “the tree of life” in both Ezekiel and Revelation is most likely collective could suggest the possibility that in Eden it was also collective. That is, it might have been a species of tree that served the purpose of pointing to God as the Creator and sustainer of life. (CC p. 626)

In the new heaven and earth, the new Eden, “the tree of life” will serve a similar function to that of “the tree of life” (Gen 2:9; 3:24) in the first Eden. John sees the tree “producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2). As Ezekiel prophetically saw in the end-time temple, so John now sees fulfilled in the new Jerusalem “the tree of life” with its various fruits and the healing ability of its leaves. God will abundantly furnish all that is necessary for the sustaining of life in the new heaven and earth. “The healing leaves indicate the complete absence of physical and spiritual want.” “The tree of life” is for all people of all nations who are written in the Lamb’s “book of life” (Rev 20:12; 21:27), that is, all the redeemed people of God. Never again will God ever have to guard the tree with cherubim to keep it from people (cf. Gen 3:24). (CC pp. 626-627)

Rev 22:1–5 does not use the designation “the Garden of Eden.” Nevertheless, the description in these verses calls it to mind, especially the mention of “the tree of life” (22:2). The new heaven and earth will be the Garden of Eden restored for God’s people to inhabit forever. The heavenly city Jerusalem in Revelation 21 represents the people of God, the bride and body of Christ, as a holy temple in the new heaven and earth, within whose midst God himself will dwell. The tree of life (and the entire Edenic paradise in 22:1–5) represents the abundant life and the lush surroundings that God will furnish and supply for his people throughout eternity. (CC p. 627)

In Gen 2:8 we are told that God “planted a garden in Eden in the east.” This was to be the home of Adam and Eve. The Hebrew word for “Eden” (עֵדֶן) means “luxury, delight, pleasure.” The proper name of “Eden” seems, then, to imply that it was a garden which was rich and luxurious in its vegetation and contained every delightful pleasure of life in communion with God (Gen 2:9–10). The LXX transliterated “Eden” (עֵדֶן) as Εδεν. But for “garden” (גַּן) the LXX^a used παράδεισος, which was transliterated into English as “paradise.” The Greek παράδεισος is also a transliteration of the Hebrew עֵדֶן. This Hebrew word

appears three times in the OT: Neh 2:8, where it refers to a king's forest or expanse of land rich in trees; Eccl 2:5, where it refers to a park-like enclosure; and Song 4:13, where it signifies an orchard. It is derived from an old Persian word which meant an "enclosure" or "wooded park" like a garden. Eventually the word came to refer to a "heavenly garden," "paradise," which could be symbolized by a beautiful earthly garden. In biblical usage παράδεισος, "paradise," came to be used as both in reference to the original Garden of Eden and also to the heavenly Garden of Eden in God's holy presence. "Paradise" (παράδεισος) appears three times in the NT. In Lk 23:42–43, when the thief on the cross petitioned Jesus to remember him when Jesus came into his kingdom, Jesus answered, "Of a truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." In 2 Cor 12:2–4, Paul speaks of himself in the third person and mentions how he was "snatched up to the third heaven," which he identifies as "the paradise" (τὸν παράδεισον). And in Rev 2:7 at the conclusion of the letter to the church at Ephesus, Christ promises "the one who conquers" that he will give to him "to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). (CC pp. 627-628)

In Revelation "the tree of life" appears four times: 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19. Only in 2:7 is "the tree of life" mentioned in connection with "the paradise of God," the new Eden. In 2:7 in the blessing, at the conclusion of the first of the seven letters to the churches, it is spoken of in an eschatological context. Those who remain victorious to the End will "eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." Before they fell into sin, Adam and Eve could have eaten freely from this tree. But after their fall and consequent expulsion from the garden, they could not eat of it. But in the new heaven and earth after the resurrection, those who are victorious in Christ will be able to eat from this tree, indicating that they have life forever with God. The eating from the tree demonstrates that never again will God's people be ruined by temptation and sin and death. That possibility is gone forever just as surely as the dragon has forever been cast into hell and so is never again able to tempt and deceive God's people (cf. 20:7–10). (CC p. 628)

While here in 22:2 only "the tree of life" is mentioned, it is to be understood that it is in the midst of paradise, the restored Garden of Eden. It renders its fruits and healing leaves forever for all "the nations," all the people of God in Christ. The third and fourth times that "the tree of life" is mentioned in Revelation are in the epilogue (22:6–21). Rev 22:14 affirms, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that their authority shall be over the tree of life, and by the gates they will enter into the city." And 22:19 warns that "if anyone should take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will remove his portion from the tree of life." (CC p. 628)

EVERY MONTH – This fruit is perpetually available, further underscoring the abundance of life in heaven. Luther: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but His words will not pass away (Matt. 24:35). He is therefore the 'tree of life' (Rev. 22:2), firmly 'planted in the house of the Lord' (cf. Ps. 92:13), producing His fruit

in its season, the firstfruits of all the trees that imitate Him in these. Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together (Gen. 3:7), that is, they fabricated words of excuse for their sins in order to cover and excuse their shame. Therefore their leaves fell off” (AE 10:22). (TLSB)

22:3-5 NO LONGER WILL THERE BE A CURSE – As in 21:4, John describes heaven by means of negation (i.e., by stating what things there will not be). The Lord will undo the ancient curse caused by Adam and Eve’s sin. Bede: “What can be happier than that life, where there is no fear of poverty—no weakness of disease; where none can be hurt, none can be angry; where none can envy, none can be impure; where none can be tormented with the desire of honour, or the ambition of power? No fear there of the Devil; no snares there of evil spirits; no terror there of hell; no death there, either of soul or body, but a life blessed in the gift of immortality. No discord there forever, but all things in harmony—all things in agreement: because there will be one concord of all saints—one peace, and one joy. Tranquil are all things there, and quiet. Perpetual is the splendour there: not such as the sunlight which now is, but both more glorious and more happy” (*FSEP*, pp 3–4). (TLSB)

22:3 THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB – And so in the restored Garden of Eden, the paradise of God, there shall no longer be “any curse” (22:3). The original curse of God upon the earth because of Adam’s sin (Gen 3:14–19) will be supplanted by God’s eternal blessing. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse on our behalf,” Paul reminds us in Gal 3:13 (cf. Rom 8:3; Gal 4:4–5). (CC pp. 628-629)

The curse is gone. Now “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in her” (22:3), that is, in the city (21:2) now pictured as Eden, the paradise of God. In 22:1 “the river of the water of life” came “from the throne of God and of the Lamb”; this river flows through the city. Now in 22:3 attention is focused on the throne itself, the same throne of God and of the Lamb. The impression is given that the center and focus of the new Eden, the new heaven and earth, will be “the throne.” (E.g., Rev. 4:2-3; 5:13; 7:10; 12:5; 19:4; 21:5) Previously in Revelation, John saw God the Father seated on the throne. (E.g., Rev 4:2-3; 5:13; 7:10; 12:5; 19:4; 21:5) Twice the Lamb is seen by John *near* the throne (5:6; 7:17), but not *on* the throne with God the Father. Now, as John is shown the new heaven and earth, the restored Garden of Eden, *for the first time he sees the Lamb with the Father sitting on the throne* (22:1; cf. 22:3). In the first Eden, before the fall, God dwelt with people. Now in the second Eden the triune God will dwell with his people. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son, is now seen together with God the Father because it was he who won the victory and reconciled to the Father his creation, and in particular his people as his kingdom (see 1:5–6; 5:10; cf. Col 1:13–20). Thus the full divinity of the Son and his equality with the Father are emphasized by the fact that they share one single throne, “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:1, 3). And the *unity* of the Father and the Son is stressed further by the

singular pronouns whose antecedent is “God and ... the Lamb”: “*his* [not *their*] slaves will serve *him* [not *them*]” (22:3). (CC p. 629)

WORSHIP – The final goal of redeemed humanity, which underscores why keeping the Sabbath is so vital in biblical teaching. (TLSB)

“His slaves will serve him as worshipers” (22:3). God’s people will live in the new Eden as the slaves whose very actions and works will be a worship of God and the Lamb. They are “slaves” in the sense of always being in the state of righteousness given by their Lord. They are “slaves” who adore and glorify the Author of their blessed state. No longer now, nor ever again will they be slaves of sin and suffering and death (cf. Rom 6:12–23). Earlier John had seen and heard the saints singing before God’s throne (Rev 7:9–17), and he had seen and heard the twenty-four elders (Rev. 4:4, 10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4), who represent all the saints, worshiping the Father and the Lamb with the singing of the great Te Deum (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:9-14; 11:17-18; 19:4) Now he sees the people of God in the new Eden after the resurrection, praising and worshiping God not only with their voices but also in deeds, for their every action and work is also a great Te Deum. (CC p. 629)

22:4 *They will see his face.* In ancient times criminals were banished from the presence of the king (Est 7:8; cf. 2Sa 14:24). One blessing of eternity will be to see the Lord face to face (cf. 1Co 13:12). (CSB)

The climactic statement in this vision of heaven, since beholding God face-to-face, living in His presence, and enjoying unmediated communion with Him is the greatest blessing of heaven. Cf 21:3. (TLSB)

“And they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (22:4). Since the fall no human being had ever seen God face to face, for to do so meant death (Ex. 33:18-20; cf. Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12). Of old the promise had been given that God’s people “in righteousness” would one day see his “face” and his “likeness” (Ps 17:15 cf. Num. 6:25-26; Mt. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:2). Now in the new Eden that promise is fulfilled. In the letter to the church of Philadelphia Christ promised the one who conquers, “I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God—the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God—and my own new name” (Rev 3:12). They belong to God and to the Lamb as citizens of the new Jerusalem. Their entire lives are consecrated to God as those who have been named and identified as his through the redemption wrought by the Lamb. (CC pp. 629-630)

his name. See note on 3:12. (CSB)

22:5 GOD WILL GIVE THEM LIGHT – In 21:22–25 John heard that in the holy city Jerusalem there would be no night and no need for the sun and the moon, for God would be the city’s light and the Lamb her lamp. Here in 22:5 this

blessed statement is given again, only now in reference to the new Eden. The commentary on 21:22–25 suggested that this does not necessarily mean there will be no *physical* sun and moon in the new heaven and earth, but rather that God and the Lamb would be the true *spiritual* light that would enlighten and inspire his people. (CC p. 630)

they will reign. See 5:10; 20:6; Da 7:18, 27. (CSB)

“And they will reign forever and ever” (22:5). Two passages in Revelation (5:10; 20:4–6) promise that God’s people will and in fact do reign with Christ already now during their lives on earth. But only 22:5 says that the saints “will reign *forever.*” The reign of the saints on the present earth is temporary, and it continues during the time that God allots for his church to complete her mission in Christ (see 11:3–13). But the reign in the new heaven and earth will never end. (CC p. 630)

Excursus – The Restored Physical Creation

In the description of the new heaven and earth as the holy city Jerusalem (21:1–27) and as the new Eden (22:1–5), God did not reveal to John *how the newly restored creation in its geophysical dimensions and character will appear.* It was not the Lord’s purpose to reveal details about the entirety of the cosmos and universe. In using the designations and descriptions of the holy city Jerusalem and the new Eden, God does give to John an awesome view of what it will mean for Christians to live with him in his holy presence (Jerusalem) under his perpetual care and blessings (Eden). Whatever the actual physical form of the restored earth, God and his Christ will dwell in the midst of his people for they will be God’s Holy of Holies, his holy Jerusalem. And whatever kind of physical life his people will live and experience in their resurrected bodies, God will richly supply their earthly needs as he did with Adam and Eve in the first paradise before the fall. (CC pp. 631-633)

As the Lord gives this spiritual description of the new heaven and earth, using the illustrations of the holy city Jerusalem and the new Eden, does John receive any indication or hint as to what the restored geophysical earth might be like? Is it possible to see such an indication (despite the fact that this was not the primary intent) in the use of “the tree of life” (22:14, 19; cf. 2:7), which is an implicit reference to the Garden of Eden? The mention of the tree of life in the restored paradise could suggest that the *physical* everyday life of God’s people on the new earth will be abundantly furnished and supplied by God. *That people can eat freely of the tree of life (as was possible before the fall) indicates that the recreated physical earth under God’s creative providence will forever supply people’s every bodily need.* (CC pp. 631-633)

That John receives, by way of the tree of life, the Garden of Eden, a theme with reference to the new heaven and earth could also suggest that the newly recreated physical earth will be like that of the original. The geophysical earth, in its pristine form with living creatures and plant life for the enjoyment and benefit of humanity (cf. Gen 1:28–30), and with bodies of water, as indicated by “the river of the water of life” (Rev 22:1), nourishing and refreshing the earth (Gen 1:9–10; 2:10), could be a type and model of the new earth. The solar system with its sun and moon and the heavens above with their stars in their original pristine form and function could well suggest that these or similar heavenly bodies will be present in the recreated heaven and earth, fulfilling similar functions (cf. Gen 1:14–18). All of this could be seen encompassed in God’s assertion in Rev 21:5, “I make all things new!” Furthermore it may be that the *entire orb of the physical earth* in its restored condition will be a virtual Garden of Eden, and that the tree of life could be a particular species which is present over the entire orb of the earth—as suggested by the picture resulting if the tree of life in Rev 22:2 is a collective noun. This scenario is possible because wherever God’s people might live in the new earth, and should they inhabit its entire orb, they will live in their own particular Garden of Eden with the tree of life ever present. (CC pp. 631-633)

However and whatever one may surmise from these possible hints in the biblical text, God does not give to John a direct answer to the question as to what physical form or appearance the entire new heaven and earth will take. But his allusion to the Garden of Eden, with its suggestions as to what the recreated earth might look like, agrees with what Paul says in Rom 8:18–25. The apostle declares that the creation eagerly “awaits the unveiling of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19; cf. 8:22). Here “creation” refers to all that God created in addition to humanity, that is, the heavenly bodies, the earth, and its plant and animal life. Because the present creation was put under God’s curse as a result of human sin, it “was subjected to futility” (Rom 8:20). It was subjected to ruin, decay, and atrophy, but also it was subjected “on the basis of hope, because creation itself will be set free from this slavery of destruction into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:20–21). This is a clear biblical promise that the present earth, which is suffering God’s judgment and thus is wasting away (as portrayed vividly in Revelation, for example, Rev 8:7–13), will be restored to its original state—even as God’s people will have their bodies restored in the resurrection so that they will be like Christ’s own glorious resurrection body (Phil 3:21). This renewal of the present decaying earth (as taught in Romans 8) agrees with Rev 21:5, where God promises, “I make all things new!” (CC pp. 631-633)

The theology of the incarnation itself suggests that, as a result of Christ’s redemptive activity and his own bodily resurrection, those in Christ in the resurrection will be restored to God’s original design for humanity’s bodily state, and so also will the present earth be restored to its original, divinely intended state as the home for God’s resurrected people. Paul himself hints at such a connection between Christ’s resurrection, the resurrection of all those in Christ,

and the renewal of the present earth in 1 Corinthians 15. The Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection is the foundation upon which all Christian hope rests (1 Cor 15:1–8). The promise of “the resurrection of the body” (Apostles' Creed) is predicated upon Christ's own bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:12–23). As for the question of “how are the dead raised?” (1 Cor 15:35), the apostle draws a series of analogies and comparisons. The comparison of the present mortal body to the Christian's resurrected body is analogous to the comparison of a seed to the full-grown plant into which it is transformed (1 Cor 15:36–38). Paul then uses in a comparison the sub-human bodies of earthly animate life and the heavenly inanimate bodies (1 Cor 15:39–41). His direct point of comparison is that the bodies of resurrected people and the earthly and heavenly bodies are not all of the same essence and they possess differing degrees of glory. “With poetic boldness and with a penetrating prophetic insight Paul sees the whole splendid theatre of the universe together with all sub-human life within it as eagerly awaiting the time when the sons of God will be made manifest in their true glory.” While Scripture gives to the Christian such beautiful glimpses of the age to come, the fullness of its glory is beyond our ability to comprehend now, for “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2:9 NIV). Nevertheless, it is a certainty that all creation, as a result of Christ's redemption and resurrection, will be restored and transformed to its original pattern of God's gracious creative activity. (CC pp. 631-633)

22:6–21† The conclusion of the book. John and the angel (vv. 8–11); Jesus speaks to John (vv. 12–19); John's final word to the churches (vv. 20–21). (CSB)

Rev 22:6–21 is the epilogue of this prophetic work of John. In the prologue (1:1–8) the source and purpose of the message were identified, and a trinitarian imprimatur was given. The epilogue serves not only as a farewell, but also as an affirming “amen” to the certainty that this prophetic message of Revelation is the last word from the Lord of the church until he comes. The epilogue, together with the prologue, declares the absolute authenticity of this work of John and the urgency for it to be heeded immediately by the church, “for the time is near” (22:10). (CC p. 639)

Similarities between the prologue and epilogue can be noted. In addition to the urgency expressed in the thought, “the time is near” (1:3; 22:6), there are, for example, the facts that the message of Revelation is a genuine prophecy (1:3; 22:6, 9), that the message is given to John through the angel of Jesus/God (1:1; 22:6, 16), and that John is mentioned as the human mediator to the churches (1:1–2; 22:8). Because of such similarities (and others) it is possible to surmise that “the Prologue may have been the last part of the book to be written and thus reflects the influence of the Epilogue.” While today it is common for the introduction to a literary work to be written (or at least revised) after the rest of the work has been completed, that may not be true of ancient literary works. However, it is a possibility, especially when the contents of the prologue are viewed in the light of 1:9–20. The first thing that seems to have happened was

the Son of Man's appearance to John to commission him to write the revelation (1:9–20), and the prologue (1:1–8) may have been composed later. (CC p. 639)

22:6 THE ANGEL – The speaker (“he,” 22:6) is most likely an angel, the same angel who has been attending John throughout the vision of the End (17:1–22:5; see the commentary on 17:1 and 22:1). He says to John that “these words” of the prophetic message of Revelation “are faithful and true” (22:6). This is a refrain, announced often in Revelation. In the introduction to the sixth letter to the churches, the Son of Man says that he is “the holy one, the true one” (3:7), and in the introduction to the seventh letter, he says that he is “the Amen, the witness, the faithful and true one” (3:14). In 15:3 the people of God in mortal conflict on earth praise God by saying that his ways are “righteous and true,” and in 16:7 God is worshiped with the words “true and righteous are your judgments.” (CC pp. 639-640)

God sent “his angel” to show to John and his hearers the message of Revelation (22:6). The definite article before this “angel” (τὸν ἄγγελον) seems to identify him either as an angel who appeared earlier or as a particular, well-known angel—perhaps known even outside and beyond the book of Revelation. This is the only reference in Revelation to an angel as the angel of “Yahweh, the God” (ὁ κύριος ὁ θεός, 22:6). In 1:1 we are told that Jesus Christ “through his angel” (διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ) gave the message of Revelation to John. There too the definite article identifies this angel of Christ as a specific angel. In 22:16, in the epilogue, Jesus himself, referring to this same angel, says, “I ... sent my angel” (τὸν ἄγγελόν μου) to give to John and the churches the message. Again the definite article identifies this angel. The angel in 1:1 is the same as the one in 22:16. (CC p. 641)

Who is the angel of “Yahweh, the God” here in 22:6? Most likely it is the same angel whom Jesus Christ calls his own in 1:1 and 22:16. That this is evidently the case can be deduced when 1:1 is compared with 22:6 and 22:16. In 1:1 God gives the message to Jesus Christ, who in turn gives it *through his angel* to John. Rev 22:6 says that God gave his words through his angel. In 22:6 it may appear that the angel has taken the place of Jesus Christ as the mediator of the message. But that is not really the case. For 22:16 affirms again (as did 1:1) that Jesus gave it *through his angel*. The message originates with God the Father. It is then given by God to Jesus Christ, who through his angel (who is also the Father's angel) gives it to John. The apostle then mediates the revelation to the entire church (cf. 10:11). (CC p. 641)

This identification of the same angel being both the angel of God the Father and the angel of Jesus Christ becomes all the more apparent when the “mighty angel” of 10:1 is brought into consideration. In chapter 10 we have a picture of an angel who belongs to both God the Father (the cloud and the halo-like rainbow, 10:1) and to Jesus Christ (the sun, 10:1). This “mighty angel” in the place of God and Jesus Christ commissions John to take the message to all peoples (10:8–

11). Thus the definite article here in 22:6, and also in 1:1 and 22:16, suggests that “the angel” of God and Jesus Christ is the same angel as the “mighty angel” of Revelation 10. (CC p. 641)

Is there such an identifiable angel of God who is well-known outside of Revelation? There comes to mind the angel of the exodus, who led the Israelites by a pillar of cloud and of fire (Ex 13:21–22; 14:15–20). This angel is called “the angel of God” (מַלְאֲכֵי הָאֱלֹהִים; LXX: ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ, Ex 14:19), and this angel seems to be Yahweh himself (Ex 14:24). There is also “the angel of Yahweh” (מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה; LXX: ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου) who appeared to people in the stead of God and who is identified with Yahweh himself (Gen 16:7–14; Ex 3:1–14; Judg 13:3–22). In Is 63:9 the prophet declares that when God was saddened by the sufferings of his people, “the angel of his face/presence [מַלְאֲכֵי פָנָיו] saved them; in his love and his mercy he redeemed them.” There is thus in the OT an angel of God who acted on God’s behalf in particular roles that were well-known, and in certain passages that angel is even identified as Yahweh himself. But probably here in Rev 22:6 the definite article does not primarily point to that angel (or those angels) in the OT. Rather, it is used to identify the angel of God in 22:6 and the angel of Jesus in 1:1 and 22:16 as the same angel of Jesus which (definite) angel is spoken of in Revelation 10. There is a correspondence between the angel of God and of Jesus in Revelation and the angel of God in the OT, as indicated by the roles they play in the revealing of God’s words and will, and on reflection John and his recipients would probably be reminded of that link. (CC p. 642)

WORDS ARE TRUSTWORTHY AND TRUE – John originally meant for these words to apply to this particular Book. Within a canonical context, however, they may profitably be applied to the whole of Scripture (cf 2Tm 3:16). (TLSB)

These statements that God is righteous and true declare that there is an absolute truth, a truth that is righteous and so never changes, a truth that is faithful in its intent. God is the source of this truth and the Lord Christ is the faithful witness to it. And Christ is also the “Amen” of this truth, that is, the confirmation that there is no truth except that which originates from God the Father and comes through Christ and his words. (Jn. 1:14-17; 14:6; 17:3, 8, 17; Rom. 3:4) And the words that God speaks and which are witnessed to by his Christ are true and certain, as the angel declares to John in 19:9. In the vision of the new heaven and earth (21:1–27), God himself says to John and his people, “these words [of mine] are faithful and true” (οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν, 21:5). That applies, first of all, to the words that described the holy city Jerusalem. That statement that his words “are faithful and true” also affirms what God had said previously in the same verse, “Behold, I make all things new!” And now here in the epilogue, for a final time, the angel (on behalf of God) states the same absolute certainty, “These words are faithful and true” (22:6). Here they are an explicit affirmation of the entire prophetic message of Revelation. And like the other affirmations, these

words also apply to *all of Scripture, with Revelation, the final book of the canon, serving as the amen to the entire Word of God* (cf. 22:18–19). (CC p. 640)

The words of the prophetic message of Revelation are faithful and true because “Yahweh, the God of the spirits of the prophets,” is the one who sent his angel to transmit the words to John, and it is God himself who stands behind them (22:6). The Lord God who inspired “the spirits of the prophets” to speak for him is the source of this prophetic work of John. Clearly there is only one God, who spoke through the prophets and who now speaks through John. But who are these “prophets”? It is not necessary “to decide between OT or NT prophets because in either case the same prophetic function is being carried out.”⁴ While a case can be made that they are NT prophets, (Cf. Rev. 11:10; 16:6; 18:20, 24) probably here in 22:6 the emphasis falls on the prophets of the OT. This seems to be so because of the sentence structure of 22:6, which makes a distinction between “the prophets” of God and God’s “slaves,” who now (at John’s time) receive his words—the “slaves” being John himself and his audience, as stated in 1:1. The prophets of God seem to belong to the past while John and his fellow slaves of God are in the present. (CC pp. 640-641)

his servants. See v. 3. (CSB)

Once more emphasizes the role that angels play in serving God by revealing the prophetic word to John. (TLSB)

things that must soon take place. See 1:1, 19. (CSB)

The imminence of Christ’s second coming is more obvious from the divine than from the human perspective. However, Jesus does not leave the Church as an orphan in the meantime (Jn 14:18). He is present in Word and Sacrament (Mt 18:20, 28:20), most intimately in the Eucharist. (TLSB)

The angel in 22:6 was sent “to show to his [God’s] slaves what events are necessary to soon take place.” In both the prologue (1:1) and here in the epilogue the recipients of the message of Revelation, are called “slaves” (δοῦλοι). Several times in Revelation, God’s people, his saints on earth, are called his “slaves.” (Rev. 2:20; 7:3; 19:2, 3; 22:3) John also calls himself a “slave” because he is the recipient who will give the message to the churches (1:1). In 10:7 the prophets of God to whom he had given the mystery of the Gospel are called “slaves” (cf. 11:18). In 15:3 Moses is called a “slave” of God. The saints of God and his prophets are called “slaves,” because they are called to do his bidding. They belong to him and to no other *because they have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb and they bear his seal on their foreheads* (7:3). “Slave” is thus a term identifying those who have God’s grace because of the redemption wrought by Christ and who belong to God’s household for the purpose of a mission of service. (CC p. 642)

The words “what events are necessary to soon take place” (22:6) refer to the entire message of Revelation. The events described will certainly take place: human evil and the resulting sufferings under God’s judgment, and the church of Christ completing her mission. It is *necessary* that these events take place—especially the completion of the witness of the church to Christ’s redemption of the human race at his first advent and to his second coming in judgment. There is an *urgency* that the events prophesied be fulfilled, *for the time of Christ’s return is near*, and the church only has so much time to complete her mission (Cf. Rev. 1:3; 6:9-11; 10:5-11; 11:7-12). (CC pp. 642-643)

Jesus Is Coming

⁷ **“Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”** ⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. ⁹ But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!” ¹⁰ Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. ¹¹ Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.” ¹² **“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴ “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. ¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you ^a this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, **“Yes, I am coming soon.”** Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.**

22:7 *I am coming soon!* See vv. 12, 20; 2:16; 3:11. (CSB)

Without announcement, the speaker switches from the angel to Christ Himself. (TLSB)

ν τάχει ... ταχύ—Both of these are occurrences of the adjective ταχύς, “quick, swift.” The prepositional phrase ἐν τάχει, “in haste,” occurs also in 1:1 and functions as an adverb, “quickly, soon.” ταχύ is the neuter form of the adjective. It too functions as an adverb (BAGD, 2 b), and it occurs in 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20. (CC p. 638)

To impress upon John and his hearers that the time truly is near when all things will be quickly brought to their consummation, Christ’s words ring out, “Behold, I am coming quickly” (22:7). This is not the first time that a voice in the first person is interjected and seemingly interrupts the words or the flow of thought of an angel. In 1:8 God the Father, the Almighty, breaks in by speaking in the first person and thus concludes the prologue. In 21:5–6 God again intrudes, as it were, into the vision of the new heaven and earth and speaks in the first person. And now here in 22:7 a voice interrupts the words of the angel and speaks in the first person. *In this instance it is certainly the Lord Christ who is speaking, for he speaks of something that is applicable only to himself, namely, his second coming.* In Rev 2:16 and again in 3:11 the exalted Son of Man makes the same statement, “I am coming (to you) quickly.” In those two instances (in the third and sixth letters) the Lord Christ addresses the churches in order to urge them to heed his message of warning and encouragement. Here in 22:7 these same words (“I am coming quickly”) are spoken in direct reference to the present world’s imminent end. They are spoken as an encouragement to everyone “who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (22:7), that is, the book of Revelation (cf. Mt 24:36–44). While the two references in Rev 2:16 and 3:11 also have the End in mind, they are part of the seven letters, which are directed to specific conditions *in preparation for* the hearing of the main message of Revelation (4:1–22:5). Here in 22:7 the words “I am coming quickly” come *after* the entire prophetic message of Revelation has been heard and serve as an urgent reminder to heed the message in view of the imminence of the End. (CC p. 643)

Blessed. The sixth beatitude (see note on 1:3). (CSB)

Also in 16:15 the Lord Christ speaks in the first person and breaks into what John is seeing and hearing. This is within the sixth scene (16:12–16) of the third vision of events taking place on earth (15:1–16:21), the scene introduced by the sixth censer-angel. Jesus says, “I am coming as a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and guards his garments, so that he might not walk about naked and so that they might not see his shame.” Jesus says this in relation to what John sees concerning Armageddon, which is the final battle that will take place just before Christ’s return to bring the present world to its end. (CC pp. 643-644)

As in 16:15, so also here in 22:7, a beatitude is added: “Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” This is the sixth of the seven beatitudes in Revelation. The first beatitude (1:3) is addressed to both the lector (singular) and the people (plural) who are about to hear the prophecy: “Blessed is

the one who reads and [blessed are] those who hear the words of this prophecy and who keep the things written in it.” Here in the epilogue in 22:7 the beatitude is similar, but now in reference to the prophecy that has been revealed to John and heard by his audience. (CC p. 644)

22:8 I, JOHN – Author solemnly affirms that he is a firsthand witness to what he has written. John writes similarly about eyewitness testimony in his Gospel (Jn 19:35) and Epistle (1Jn 1:1–3). (TLSB)

fell down to worship. See note on 1:17. (CSB)

As John does in the prologue (1:1–4), so also here in the epilogue, the apostle identifies himself as the human author of this prophetic work—but now with the added words that he was the one who heard and saw these things (22:8). As if by way of assuring his recipients, John tells them that he truly saw and heard these things. He was a witness who would vouch for and give testimony to the entire revelation (cf. 1:2). “His literary product is not the result of any flight of imagination.” In 1 John he states that what he and the other witnesses had heard and seen with their own eyes (ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὁ ἑώρακάμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν) and what their hands had touched (καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν), he has now announced and witnessed to his hearers (1 Jn 1:1–4). John claims this same eyewitness authenticity for this prophetic work of Revelation. His written work is truly the word and product of God, for this revelation was given to him from God the Father through Jesus Christ and by his angel (cf. Rev 1:1–3). (CC p. 644)

When John had heard and seen all that was revealed to him, he “fell down to worship before the feet of the angel” who had shown these things to him (22:8). This is the second time that John attempted to worship the angel who was attending him. In 19:10 John “fell before his [the angel’s] feet” in order “to worship him” when he had just seen the bride of Christ ready to be received by the Bridegroom in the great marriage banquet. Now here in 22:8, after the entire prophetic message had been presented to John, he again attempts to worship the angel. (CC p. 64)

22:9 DO NOT DO IT – ὄρα μή—Literally “see, no!” or “look out, no!” this is an ellipsis. A few manuscripts (e.g., 1006, 1841) have completed the thought by adding the word ποιήσης, “look out that you not do [that]” (cf. the Vulgate, “vide ne feceris”). (CC p. 638)

This warning may well reflect John’s desire that the churches of Asia Minor resist the temptation to worship angels. This problem plagued nearby Colossae (Col 2:18). (TLSB)

WORSHIP GOD – τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον—The placement of τῷ θεῷ at the start of the phrase makes it emphatic: “*the God* is the one you must worship.” The translation given above tries to capture the exclusivity of the command by

inserting “only”: “Worship only God.” The command is found also in 19:10. (CC p. 638)

As was said in the commentary on 19:10, this action is difficult to understand. Certainly John did not attempt to worship the angel because of the status of the angel, for that would be a willful act of idolatry (cf. Col 2:18). And it is not the case that John supposed that the angel was God the Father or Christ and therefore was moved to worship him. Most likely (as in the case of 19:10) he knelt down because he was so overwhelmed by what he had heard and seen that he was moved to honor the angel who was guiding him through the visions. But this action was misplaced, for such honor and worship belong to God alone. And so the angel tells him not do so, for he (the angel) is also “a fellow slave” of God like John and his brothers the prophets and those who keep the words of this book (22:9). The angel who had shown these things to him was only acting as a slave of God and in so doing was a ministering angel in service to John (cf. Heb 1:14). (CC p. 645)

22:10 *Do not seal up the words.* Contrast Da 12:4. (CSB)

Exact opposite of command given to Daniel. Because God had already begun to fulfill the events described in this Book, John’s prophecy was for immediate release. (TLSB)

The speaker in 22:10–11 is not directly identified. But it is most likely an angel (cf. 22:6), the same angel that had been attending John throughout the vision of the End (17:1–22:5). He tells John not to “seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.” In Dan 8:26 just the opposite is said. Daniel *is* to “seal the vision” because it is about the distant future. But here in Rev 22:10 John is told *not* to seal the vision because the future events are imminent, that is, what John has seen and heard is about to be completed. The vision in Daniel was about the end time (Dan 8:17–19). And for Daniel the words describing that end time “were closed and sealed until the time of the end” (Dan 12:9). But that is not so for John, for that end time was to arrive soon, almost immediately. And for present-day hearers and readers, the time of the End is that much closer. (CC p. 645)

22:11 WHO DOES WRONG – Cf Rm 1:26–31, where Paul speaks about God giving people up to their dishonorable passions and debased minds. A stronger pronouncement of judgment can hardly be spoken. Luth: “He who progresses in the unremitting exercise of his faith concludes: ‘I am not in the host that is against Christ; I am for Christ. I do not deny the Word, and I do not persecute the church. Hence I have been called to the kingdom of God and have been elected. But if I fall because of weakness, I rise again; I grieve over my sin and pray for forgiveness. Thus through the very works of repentance and love I realize that I am one of those who have been snatched from the conflagration of Babel or from the dregs of the world.’ Thus even though this obedience does not justify, it

nevertheless gives evidence of faith and makes it manifest, as it were, so that it can be seen. Therefore Revelation (22:11) states: 'He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.' Just as those who occupy themselves with works of unbelief continually become more and more unbelieving, and through that continual effort sin gains strength, as it were, so, vice versa, faith increases in those who practice godliness. As a result, they conclude with certainty that they belong to the church" (AE 3:169–70). (TLSB)

So near is the hour of fulfillment that the angel tells John people will have little time to change their manner of life. Earlier in Revelation, God's judgments had not evoked repentance in obdurate sinners (e.g., 9:20–21). So too here, despite the dire warnings, many will not heed the urgent call to repentance. Sinners will continue to "do wrong" and remain "filthy" (22:11). At the same time, God calls his people, "the righteous," to "continue to do righteousness" and to "continue to be holy" (22:11). The possibility is still present *right now* for change of status before God—from unrighteous and filthy to righteous and holy—through hearing the warnings of God and the gracious invitation of his mercy in Christ. But *now is the time*, not tomorrow, for the hour is late (cf. Rom 13:11–14; 1 Thess 5:6–7; 1 Jn 2:18). This passage underlines the extreme urgency of the church's mission to proclaim the Gospel and to persevere in the righteousness and holiness that are hers by grace. (CC pp. 645-646)

22:12 BEHOLD – It is used to emphasize the importance of something. Used 26 times in Revelation. (Bauer)

I am coming soon! See vv. 7, 20; 2:16; 3:11. (CSB)

Again a voice speaks in the first person. As in Rev 22:7, it is the voice of the Lord Christ, who says, "Behold, I am coming quickly" (22:12). Then the exalted Christ adds, "And my reward is with me to render to each as is his work." In 22:7 he had said, "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Those who keep the words of Revelation will receive the "reward" from the Lord Christ himself. This word for "reward," μισθός, in extrabiblical Koine Greek usually refers to a monetary or material payment or recompense, "salary" or "wage." Most often in the NT the word is used not in that secular sense, but rather with the meaning of spiritual compensation. For example, in Mt 5:12 Jesus refers to the "reward" in heaven that belongs to those who are persecuted as were the prophets of old (cf. Mt 6:1). In Mt 10:40–42 those who belong to Jesus and who thus receive a prophet or who help Christ's disciples will not lose their "reward." In 1 Cor 9:17–18 Paul speaks of his "reward" as his call to proclaim the Gospel. His compensation is the sharing of Christ with his hearers. The word can also be used in a negative spiritual sense when, for example, Jesus refers to the "reward" of false piety: the hypocrites' false belief in their own self-righteousness is their only "reward" (Mt 6:2, 5). (CC pp. 646-647)

MY REWARD – Though numerous other NT passages similarly speak about the faithful being rewarded, they never do so apart from grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. The unrighteous, on the other hand, will have no one to blame but themselves when they are condemned for their iniquity. (TLSB)

Here in Rev 22:12 the “reward” is what Christ will give when he comes at the End. While the Lord Christ in judgment will render to each unbeliever that person’s reward according to his works of evil (cf. Rom 2:6, 8–9), here in Rev 22:12 it is the “reward” that the Lord Jesus will give to his faithful followers. Their works do not earn the “reward,” but rather their works demonstrate that by his grace and the power of the Spirit they keep “the words of the prophecy” of Revelation (22:7) and exhibit their faithfulness to their Lord (cf. Mt 25:31–40). Christ calls it “*my reward*” (Rev 22:12), *not their* reward; it is the reward *which Christ himself earned*, and which he freely gives to all believers by grace. *The “reward” itself is the gift of eternal life in God’s holy presence, earned for God’s people by the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God (5:9–10; 7:13–17). This “reward” is represented by the tree of life (22:2, 14).* A parallel OT theme is found in Isaiah. Yahweh will return to his people in power and glory, and “his reward is with him” (Is 40:10; 62:11). He will claim his redeemed people and shepherd them gently (Is 40:11; 62:12). Moreover, the Suffering Servant of Yahweh will share the victor’s spoils, which *he himself* earned, with his many justified saints (Is 53:12; cf. also Is. 49:4; 61:8; 65:7). (CC p. 647)

according to what he has done. See notes on 2:23; 20:12. (CSB)

22:13 The exalted Lord Christ continues in Rev 22:13 by saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” Here are three descriptive titles that point to the infinite and eternal magnitude of the presence of Jesus Christ. The first title, “the Alpha and the Omega,” is applied to God the Father in 1:8 and 21:6. Here in 22:13 God the Son, the Lord Christ, identifies himself by this same title. Both the Father (21:1) and Jesus Christ (22:13) also claim the third title, “the Beginning and the End.” The first and third titles they both share. But the second title, “the First and the Last,” is used only of Jesus Christ (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is mentioned explicitly in the epilogue of Revelation in 22:17. (CC p. 647)

While these three titles may seem to be synonymous, they certainly are not equivalents. If they all mean *exactly* the same thing, then why is Jesus Christ called “the First and the Last” three times in Revelation (1:17; 2:8; 22:13), but that title is never ascribed to God the Father? The fact that the Father is not so designated suggests that this title is not the exact equivalent of the other two. All three point to the infinite reality and the eternal presence of God; two are predicated of the Father and all three of the Son, Jesus. But each title has its own distinct and essential point. (CC pp. 647-648)

“The Alpha and the Omega”

Heretofore, this title has been applied to the Father. The application here of this title to Christ makes for a strong affirmation of Jesus' true Godhead. (TLSB)

Of the three, the first, “the Alpha and the Omega” (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὰ, the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet), is the most comprehensive, for it dominates and embraces the other two. It refers to the magnitude of the eternal presence of God far above and beyond all creation. Long before—forever before—he created the present universe, the triune God was and is. This title refers to God's eternal existence and presence apart from and independent of his creative activity and the world he brought into existence. Here in 22:13 Jesus Christ, as the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16), claims for himself this magnitude of the heavenly Father's eternal presence. He is the eternal God, together with the Father and the Spirit, but this title here in 22:13 is pertinent especially because, as the incarnate Son of God, he conquered the enemies of God's people. In claiming this title here in the epilogue, the victorious Lamb proclaims rightfully his divine equality with the heavenly Father. As true God from eternity, the Son always was present with the Father (Jn 1:1–2). But now the incarnate Son, the God-man, Jesus Christ, displays—in the personal union of his divine and human natures—this eternal magnitude which, as the victorious Lamb, he now shares with the Father. Therefore this first title “is the crowning instance in this Book of the attribution of Divine prerogatives to the Incarnate Son.” (CC pp. 648-651)

“The Beginning and the End”

Because both the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, are “the Alpha and the Omega” (the first title in 22:13), far above and beyond all creation, the Father and the Son are also “the Beginning and the End” of creation (the third title). This third title appears in contexts that concern especially the new creation. In 21:5–6 the One sitting on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new!” And then God the Father said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” that is, the beginning point and end point of what he had created and was now recreating, the new creation, the new heaven and earth. He who is “the Alpha and the Omega” above and beyond all creation is now also “the Beginning and the End” of all that he had created. And because he is “the Beginning and the End” of all creation, he will make it new and restore it to its original condition. “The Beginning and the End” (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος) points to the fact that God is the source and the beginning point of creation and that he is also its end and purpose. That is, all creation exists because of God's creative activity, and after the present order passes away, the new creation will continue to exist forever for his glory. Creation comes from God and it points to God. Now here in 22:13 Jesus Christ, the victorious Lamb, also claims to be the source and beginning of all creation as well as its end point, its purpose and its goal, which will be consummated and demonstrated in the new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 1:10). (CC pp. 648-651)

In Rev 3:14, in the introduction to the letter to the seventh church, the exalted Son of Man calls himself “the source (the beginning) of the creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ). Was the Lord Christ speaking more of the first or second creation? In Col 1:16–18 Paul states that in Christ Jesus “all things in the heavens and upon the earth were created,” referring to the original creation (cf. Jn 1:1–3). But then Paul says that as “the head of the body, the church” Christ is “the beginning (the source)” and “the firstborn [πρωτότοκος] of the dead.” Paul is saying that, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he is the beginning (the source) of the resurrection of all the dead. Since he conquered death, the Lord Christ is able to be this beginning point and source by which all will be raised from their graves—and he was the first to be raised. Paul uses the word ἀρχή (“beginning, source”) in reference to the *new creation*, that is, *the resurrection of the dead* (the glorification of their bodies). This suggests that when Jesus Christ calls himself “the source of the creation of God” (Rev 3:14), he is referring not to the creation of the *original* heavens and earth (of which he was the agent, the Logos, Jn 1:1–3), for the Father was its source (Genesis 1). He is referring to the *newcreation*, the new heaven and earth. (CC pp. 648-651)

Christ will not only be the *agent* of the creation of the new heaven and earth (cf. “the Word,” ὁ λόγος, in Rev 19:13), but also, together with the Father, he will be the beginning point and source of it. Jesus Christ will share this honor with the Father because of his victory as the Lamb of God. And so here in 22:13, when the Lord Christ calls himself “the Beginning and the End” (the third title), he claims to be *the source of the new heaven and earth*, an honor he shares with the Father who makes all things new (21:5–6). He will also be the end point and purpose for its existence, and thus, together with the Father, its glory. *So what was said of the Father concerning the first creation is also true of the Son, the Lord Christ, concerning the new creation.* It will come into being because of Christ’s creative activity, and it will exist for his glory. He will be both its beginning point and its end. It comes from the Lord Christ and it points to him. (CC pp. 648-651)

“The First and the Last”

The second title suggests still another nuanced quality of the magnitude of the infinite and eternal presence of the Deity. But this second title is applied only to Jesus Christ. Three times in Revelation the Lord Christ calls himself “the First and the Last” (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος). In 1:17–18 the Son of Man, when he addresses John and tells him not to be afraid, says, “I am the First and the Last.” He identifies himself with this title because he is “the Living One” (ὁ ζῶν). Though he “was dead,” he now is “alive forever and ever” and has “the keys of death and the grave.” Because Jesus Christ died and came back to life, he is “the First and the Last.” (CC pp. 648-651)

Of what or of whom is Jesus “the First and the Last”? In Rev 2:8, at the beginning of the letter to the church of Smyrna, the Lord Christ identifies himself a second time with this second title. And he says that he is “the First and the Last” again because he was dead but came back to life. It becomes clear that he is “the First

and the Last” of all who die in him and together with him and are raised with him spiritually already now and will be raised physically and bodily in the resurrection at the End. He is the originating source or author and the perfecter or finisher (τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν) of their faith (Heb 12:2). He is the founder of the church and her end goal, her end purpose for living. He is the church’s Lord, who will be with her until the end of the present age (Mt 28:20), for he is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb 13:8). He is her First and her Last as the eternally present one. Jesus Christ, who is “the Alpha and the Omega” beyond all creation from eternity and who is “the Beginning and the End” of the new creation, is also “the First and the Last” of God’s people. And because he is their First and Last, he is also their Beginning and End, and the Alpha and the Omega of the church (cf. Col 1:17–20). (CC pp. 648-651)

While Jesus Christ shares the first and the third titles with the Father, he alone bears the second title, “the First and the Last,” because he died and rose again to rescue God’s people in order to bring them back to life. *The incarnation, death, and resurrection are predicated only of God the Son, Jesus Christ.* In Is 44:6 Yahweh of hosts, “the King of Israel and his Redeemer,” declared, “I am the First and I am the Last” (אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֲרֵון; LXX: ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα; cf. Is 48:12, 20). Now here in Revelation (1:17; 2:8; 22:13) the exalted Lord Christ declares that he is that First and Last of God’s people because he is their Redeemer. (CC pp. 648-651)

Thus these three titles in 22:13 represent a compilation of the Christology in Revelation—in fact of the entire Bible. Jesus Christ is the everlasting God together with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, who is mentioned here in the epilogue in 22:17. From and throughout eternity he has been with the Father; the magnitude of this eternity is far above and beyond all creation and forever—long before there was this present universe. And so the title “the Alpha and the Omega” is applied to the Lord Christ. Since he is “the Alpha and the Omega,” Christ is also, again together with the Father, the initial source and the end point, the goal, of all creation, in particular now of the new heaven and earth. And finally as “the Alpha and the Omega” and as “the Beginning and the End,” the Lord Christ is “the First and the Last” of God’s people, the church. He is this First and Last *apart from* God the Father *because he alone* died and rose again. This title “the First and the Last” is mentioned in between the other two because it is to be seen and understood in the forefront, for it is only through it that we can view the other two. (CC p. 651)

That is, the three titles are presented in a pyramid-like structure, but with the point facing down and not up—an inverse pyramid (see figure 5). The point is the title “the First and the Last.” It is the smallest of the three in its scope (though not in its importance). For its scope and focus is the church because of the incarnation and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *It is only through this title and what it represents that God meets the human race* (cf. Jn 14:6–9; Heb 4:14–16; 10:19–25). Once one has seen Jesus Christ as the Savior, through him and

the great mystery of his redemption one comes to recognize him together with his Father as the God of all creation—as represented by the title “the Beginning and the End.” This title is larger in reference than that which points to Christ as the Savior of the human race, for it calls attention to the fact that Christ is not only the Lord of the church but also (together with the Father) the Lord of all creation, an entity that is larger in scope than the church. And once one has beheld Christ as the Lord of all creation, finally through Scripture’s revelation of that truth one comes to recognize him, together with the Father (and the Spirit), as the God who is and exists far beyond and above and before the created universe, that is, “the Alpha and the Omega.” This title is the largest of the three in scope, for it points to the awesome magnitude of the infinity and greatness of Christ as the eternal God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. And now here in the epilogue, in 22:13, all this high Christology is also to be understood in relation to the new heaven and new earth. (CC p. 652)

the Alpha and the Omega. See note on 1:8. (CSB)

Of the three, the first, “the Alpha and the Omega” (τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὰ, the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet), is the most comprehensive, for it dominates and embraces the other two. It refers to the magnitude of the eternal presence of God far above and beyond all creation. Long before—forever before—he created the present universe, the triune God was and is. This title refers to God’s eternal existence and presence apart from and independent of his creative activity and the world he brought into existence. Here in 22:13 Jesus Christ, as the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16), claims for himself this magnitude of the heavenly Father’s eternal presence. He is the eternal God, together with the Father and the Spirit, but this title here in 22:13 is pertinent especially because, as the incarnate Son of God, he conquered the enemies of God’s people. In claiming this title here in the epilogue, the victorious Lamb proclaims rightfully his divine equality with the heavenly Father. As true God from eternity, the Son always was present with the Father (Jn 1:1–2). But now the incarnate Son, the God-man, Jesus Christ, displays—in the personal union of his divine and human natures—this eternal magnitude which, as the victorious Lamb, he now shares with the Father. Therefore this first title “is the crowning instance in this Book of the attribution of Divine prerogatives to the Incarnate Son.” (CC pp. 648-649)

THE FIRST AND THE LAST – The second title suggests still another nuanced quality of the magnitude of the infinite and eternal presence of the Deity. But this second title is applied only to Jesus Christ. Three times in Revelation the Lord Christ calls himself “the First and the Last” (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος). In 1:17–18 the Son of Man, when he addresses John and tells him not to be afraid, says, “I am the First and the Last.” He identifies himself with this title because he is “the Living One” (ὁ ζῶν). Though he “was dead,” he now is “alive forever and ever” and has “the keys of death and the grave.” Because Jesus Christ died and came back to life, he is “the First and the Last.” (CC p. 650)

Of what or of whom is Jesus “the First and the Last”? In Rev 2:8, at the beginning of the letter to the church of Smyrna, the Lord Christ identifies himself a second time with this second title. And he says that he is “the First and the Last” again because he was dead but came back to life. It becomes clear that he is “the First and the Last” of all who die in him and together with him and are raised with him spiritually already now and will be raised physically and bodily in the resurrection at the End. He is the originating source or author and the perfecter or finisher (τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτήν) of their faith (Heb 12:2). He is the founder of the church and her end goal, her end purpose for living. He is the church’s Lord, who will be with her until the end of the present age (Mt 28:20), for he is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb 13:8). He is her First and her Last as the eternally present one. Jesus Christ, who is “the Alpha and the Omega” beyond all creation from eternity and who is “the Beginning and the End” of the new creation, is also “the First and the Last” of God’s people. And because he is their First and Last, he is also their Beginning and End, and the Alpha and the Omega of the church (cf. Col 1:17–20). (CC pp. 650-651)

While Jesus Christ shares the first and the third titles with the Father, he alone bears the second title, “the First and the Last,” because he died and rose again to rescue God’s people in order to bring them back to life. *The incarnation, death, and resurrection are predicated only of God the Son, Jesus Christ.* In Is 44:6 Yahweh of hosts, “the King of Israel and his Redeemer,” declared, “I am the First and I am the Last” (אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאֲנִי אַחֵרִים; LXX: ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα; cf. Is 48:12, 20). Now here in Revelation (1:17; 2:8; 22:13) the exalted Lord Christ declares that he is that First and Last of God’s people because he is their Redeemer. (CC p. 651)

THE BEGINNING AND THE END – Because both the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, are “the Alpha and the Omega” (the first title in 22:13), far above and beyond all creation, the Father and the Son are also “the Beginning and the End” of creation (the third title). This third title appears in contexts that concern especially the new creation. In 21:5–6 the One sitting on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new!” And then God the Father said, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” that is, the beginning point and end point of what he had created and was now recreating, the new creation, the new heaven and earth. He who is “the Alpha and the Omega” above and beyond all creation is now also “the Beginning and the End” of all that he had created. And because he is “the Beginning and the End” of all creation, he will make it new and restore it to its original condition. “The Beginning and the End” (ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος) points to the fact that God is the source and the beginning point of creation and that he is also its end and purpose. That is, all creation exists because of God’s creative activity, and after the present order passes away, the new creation will continue to exist forever for his glory. Creation comes from God and it points to God. Now here in 22:13 Jesus Christ, the victorious Lamb, also claims to be the source and beginning of all creation as well as its end point, its

purpose and its goal, which will be consummated and demonstrated in the new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 1:10). (CC p. 649)

In Rev 3:14, in the introduction to the letter to the seventh church, the exalted Son of Man calls himself “the source (the beginning) of the creation of God” (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ). Was the Lord Christ speaking more of the first or second creation? In Col 1:16–18 Paul states that in Christ Jesus “all things in the heavens and upon the earth were created,” referring to the original creation (cf. Jn 1:1–3). But then Paul says that as “the head of the body, the church” Christ is “the beginning (the source)” and “the firstborn [πρωτότοκος] of the dead.” Paul is saying that, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he is the beginning (the source) of the resurrection of all the dead. Since he conquered death, the Lord Christ is able to be this beginning point and source by which all will be raised from their graves—and he was the first to be raised. Paul uses the word ἀρχή (“beginning, source”) in reference to the *new creation*, that is, *the resurrection of the dead* (the glorification of their bodies). This suggests that when Jesus Christ calls himself “the source of the creation of God” (Rev 3:14), he is referring not to the creation of the *original* heavens and earth (of which he was the agent, the Logos, Jn 1:1–3), for the Father was its source (Genesis 1). He is referring to the *new creation*, the new heaven and earth. (CC pp. 649-650)

Christ will not only be the *agent* of the creation of the new heaven and earth (cf. “the Word,” ὁ λόγος, in Rev 19:13), but also, together with the Father, he will be the beginning point and source of it. Jesus Christ will share this honor with the Father because of his victory as the Lamb of God. And so here in 22:13, when the Lord Christ calls himself “the Beginning and the End” (the third title), he claims to be *the source of the new heaven and earth*, an honor he shares with the Father who makes all things new (21:5–6). He will also be the end point and purpose for its existence, and thus, together with the Father, its glory. *So what was said of the Father concerning the first creation is also true of the Son, the Lord Christ, concerning the new creation.* It will come into being because of Christ’s creative activity, and it will exist for his glory. He will be both its beginning point and its end. It comes from the Lord Christ and it points to him. (CC p. 650)

22:14 *Blessed.* The last of the seven beatitudes (see note on 1:3). (CSB)

In 22:14 the seventh and last beatitude in Revelation is announced. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that their authority shall be over the tree of life.”³² Who is the speaker, the angel mentioned in 21:9 and 22:8, or Christ himself? It seems to be the Lord Christ, as in 22:7. There Christ had said that he was coming quickly and then he announced a beatitude. So also here in 22:14, after Christ claims the three divine titles in 22:13, he speaks this last beatitude. Already in 7:14 John had seen those who had “washed their robes [ἔπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν] and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They were standing before God’s throne in heaven. Now here in the epilogue John is reminded by the Lord Christ himself how blessed they are. In their righteousness

before God because of the blood of the Lamb, they have “authority ... over the tree of life” (22:14). In the new Eden after the resurrection they shall be able to eat of this “tree of life” forever. And “they will enter into the city” (22:14). Because all evil as described in 22:15 will be “outside” the holy city, never again will God’s people be tempted or injured by evil, nor will those who lived for the purpose of such evil ever again shame God or hurt his beloved saints. (CC pp. 652-653)

22:15 *dogs*. A term applied to all types of ceremonially impure persons. In Dt 23:18 it designates a male prostitute. (CSB)

οἱ κύνες—The list of those outside the city is similar to the lists in 21:8, 27; see the commentary on those verses. In the OT “dog, wild dog” (כֶּלֶב) was a derogatory term for a male prostitute (Deut 23:19) and also a metaphor for an evil human enemy (Ps 22:16, 20 [MT 22:17, 21]). (CC p. 638)

PRACTICE MAGIC ARTS – οἱ φάρμακοι—See the textual note on φαρμάκων in 9:21 and the commentary on 9:21 and 18:23. “Sorcerers” would include all practitioners of occultic arts (whether “good” or “bad” magic); such practice of these arts often involves the habitual use of drugs and potions. (CC p. 638)

These were coarse sinners. Everyone whose life belies the gospel of Jesus Christ is excluded from God’s chosen people. (PBC)

22:16 I, JESUS – The Lord Christ continues to address John in 22:16. This is the only time in Revelation that the Lord speaks of himself using his personal, given name, “Jesus” (Mt 1:21; Lk 1:31). The Lord Christ spoke directly to John in 1:9–20, when he commissioned him to write this prophetic message, and in chapters 2 and 3, when he instructed John to write to the seven churches. But in neither case did the Lord use his own personal name when addressing John. While his name, “Jesus,” appears fourteen times in Revelation, only here in 22:16 is it used by the Christ. Indeed, *this is the only time in the entire NT that the Lord uses his personal name to identify himself*. While the other names and titles by which he speaks of himself display or point to the majestic grandeur of who he is and what he has done for the salvation of humanity, his personal name, “Jesus,” points to his humanity and to his intimate relationship with John and with all of God’s people. He is John’s personal and loving Savior and friend. (CC p. 653)

my angel. Cf. 1:1. (CSB)

Jesus personally authenticates the prophetic message by saying, “I, Jesus, sent my angel to testify to you [plural] these things for the churches” (22:16). The plural “you” (ὑμῖν) refers first to John and then to the other church leaders who will, in turn, proclaim the message to all the churches. Though an angel (together with the seven angels of the seven churches) actually mediated the message, it comes from the Lord Christ himself. The prologue states that the revelation was

given to Jesus Christ by God, and in turn the Lord Christ gave it to John “through his angel” (διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ, 1:1). This is most likely the same angel referred to in 22:6, which says that God the Father “sent his angel to show to his slaves what events are necessary to soon take place.” A picture of this angel, called both the angel of God the Father and the angel of Jesus, appears in Revelation 10. Though the angel mediates the message, it is God the Father and Jesus Christ who are the source, and John is to receive it as coming from the mouth of the Lord Christ himself. (CC p. 653)

the Root and the Offspring of David. See note on 5:5; cf. Isa 11:1, 10; Ro 1:3. (CSB)

Stresses Jesus’ messianic status by evoking several prophecies He fulfills (cf 2Sm 7:16; Is 11:1). Luth: “Christ according to the flesh has His root in David and the patriarchs, from whom He has arisen, but according to the Spirit He Himself is the root from which has arisen the universal church. In the first sense He is the flower, but in the second sense they are His flower” (AE 25:516). (TLSB)

Jesus continues, “I am the root and the descendant of David, the star, the bright morning one” (22:16). In 5:5 the Lamb of God is introduced to John as “the Lion who is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” (ἡ ῥίζα Δαυὶδ). Here in 22:16 Jesus calls himself “the root and the descendant of David” (ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυὶδ). He is both David’s Son and his Lord (Ps 110:1; Mk 12:35–37). In Is 11:1–10, the one who would come to dispense God’s righteousness and justice (Is 11:4) and upon whom the Spirit of Yahweh would rest (Is 11:2; cf. Lk 4:17–21) would come as “a shoot” from “the stump of Jesse” and as “a branch from his roots” (Is 11:1). Jesus applies this designation of the “shoot” of “the stump of Jesse” (Is 11:1) to himself when he calls himself “the root and the descendant of David” (Rev 22:16). (CC p. 654)

right Morning Star. See Nu 24:17. (CSB)

In addition Jesus calls himself “the star, the bright morning one” (22:16). In 2:28, at the conclusion of the letter to the church of Thyatira, the exalted Son of Man says that to the one who conquers and remains faithful there will be given “the morning star” (τὸν ἄστέρα τὸν πρωΐνον), the same “star” that the heavenly Father has given to him, the Son. The seven stars (ἄστρες) in the hand of the Son of Man represent the angels of the seven churches (1:16, 20). While stars are associated with angels, the most brilliant star in the heavens, “the morning star,” represents the brilliant glory of Christ. In Num 24:17 Balaam, in his fourth prophetic oracle, declared how “a star would come forth out of Jacob” who would become the ruling “scepter from Israel.” (CC p. 654)

In pseudepigraphal literature the star was a symbol of the king and/or priest that God promised to send. For example, in the Testament of Levi (18:2–14), the “star” of this promised priest will “rise in heaven like a king,” and he “will shine

forth like the sun” (18:2–4). His priesthood would never end (18:8). “In his priesthood sin shall cease,” and “he shall open the gates of paradise” (18:9–10). The Testament of Judah (24:1–6) says regarding a future king that “there shall arise for you a Star from Jacob in peace,” and he will be “like the Sun of righteousness” (24:1). He will be known as “the Shoot of God Most High,” and he “is the fountain for the life of all humanity” (24:4). This tradition likely would have been known to John. (CC p. 654)

Jesus Christ now claims to be that promised king and priest, that “star” of Jacob (Rev 22:16). The royal priest now shines in all his majestic glory as “the Sun of Righteousness” (Mal 4:2 [MT 3:20]). “The morning star is a promise that the long night of tribulation is all but over and that the new eschatological day is about to dawn.” As the exalted Son of Man promised to the church of Thyatira (Rev 2:28), the faithful people of God will share in this glory of their “morning star.” (CC pp. 654-655)

22:17 COME! – A simple prayer for the hastening of Christ’s appearing. This is repeated in the very final words of this Book (v 20). (TLSB)

In a voice that responds to what Jesus had just said, the Holy Spirit prompts “the bride” of Christ—the church (Eph 5:23–32; Rev 21:2, 9)—to say, “Come” (22:17). Let everyone “who hears” the words of this prophecy likewise be moved by the Spirit, who works through the Word, and say, “Come.” Anyone who thirsts is also invited to come and “receive the water of life freely.” And as they do so they desire and await the Lord’s return with all the more longing. The message of Jesus in 22:12–16 “rouses in all Christians the desire, never long dormant, for His Return.” They long for his return *now*, for his disciples have seen his glory and cry out, as did Simeon, “Now let your slave depart in peace,” for we have seen “your salvation” (Lk 2:29–30). As the church calls out for her Lord to come, she also cries out to all people of the world to come and drink of the waters of salvation freely, by grace (Is 55:1). As his people “receive the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17), they are sustained in their faith and also motivated to pray, “Come.” The Spirit also moves Christ’s “bride” to invite others to come now and drink, for the time granted by God to do so is short. (CC p. 655)

22:18–19 Cf. the commands in Dt 4:2; 12:32. The warning relates specifically to the book of Revelation. (CSB)

Echoes the warning Moses gave. (TLSB)

A sharp warning is given not to “add” (22:18) anything to the prophetic message of Revelation nor to “take away from the words of the book of this prophecy” (22:19). For to do so will incur the wrath of God, in the form of “the plagues which have been written in this book” (22:18) and by the removal of one’s “portion from the tree of life and from the holy city” (22:19). The speaker of these words of warning is Jesus Christ, who has been directly addressing John (22:7, 12–16).

As the Lord Christ says in 22:16, “I, Jesus [ἐγὼ Ἰησοῦς], sent my angel,” so also here in 22:18, “I” is Jesus, who says, “I solemnly give witness” (μαρτυρῶ ἐγώ). While in 1:2 the apostle John is the one who “witnessed to the word of God and to the witness of Jesus Christ,” and while God’s people on earth are called witnesses (2:13; 11:3; 17:6), Jesus Christ alone is “the witness, the faithful and true one” (3:14; also 1:5). And the whole of Revelation ends with the words of Jesus, “The One who is testifying to these things” (ὁ ματυρῶν ταῦτα, 22:20). He is the witness who concludes the prophetic message of Revelation with this warning that no one dare alter the words of the book. (CC pp. 655-656)

Such warnings to protect a literary writing were not uncommon in the ancient world, in particular with religious writings. For example, in his letter to Philocrates (310–11), Aristeas, in defending the LXX text of the Torah, said that the person who would alter its text should be “cursed” (διαρᾶσασθαι). Eusebius emphasizes how the early Christians passed on the faith with “painstaking carefulness.”⁵⁰ As an example he describes how Irenaeus, in his work entitled *On the Ogdoad*, adjured (ὀρκίζω) everyone who might copy his book in the name of “our Lord Jesus Christ,” who will “judge the living and the dead, to compare what thou shalt write, and correct it carefully by this manuscript, and also to write this adjuration and place it in the copy.”⁵² Here the warning not to change the words of Revelation refers not only to a faithful reproduction of it in the making of copies for distribution, but also more importantly to not changing its words in order to change its meaning. Elsewhere in the Bible such warnings are also given not to change or alter the words of God. For example, Moses in Deut 4:2 told the Israelites not to add or subtract from the commands of God (cf. Deut 12:32; Prov 30:6; Jer 26:2). (CC p. 656)

The warning that Jesus gives here in Rev 22:18–19, while directly applying to the book of Revelation, should also be applied by inference to the entire Bible, since Revelation is the climax and conclusion to the entire canon, both the OT and the NT. For the writings of the entire Bible are also so to be received as the very words of God and thus not to be altered—as indicated by the warning of Moses (Deut 12:32). For this reason Lenski states, “We hold them all [all canonical Scriptures] equally inviolate. This word of Jesus uttered by him in regard to this prophetic and last New Testament book will ever move us the more to do so with all the inspired books, in all of which the same truth, doctrine, gospel are given us to keep (τηρεῖν) inviolate.” This extension to cover all Scripture is a necessity from the biblical point of view, for the apostle Paul himself said (Gal 1:6–9) of any person who would change the one received Gospel—even if that person would be Paul himself or an angel from heaven—“let him be cursed” (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω). (CC pp. 656-657)

22:20 *I am coming soon.* See vv. 7, 12; 2:16; 3:11. (CSB)

The last word of the Lord Jesus, “Yes, I am coming quickly” (Rev 22:20), is a promise to his church, God’s saints on earth. The same one who authenticates

the prophetic message of Revelation also authenticates this promise. For it is spoken by the faithful witness of God, Jesus Christ (1:5), who solemnly testifies to everything that has been revealed to John and the churches. Just before his ascension the Lord Christ promised that he would be with his disciples “up to the end of the age” (ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, Mt 28:20). In Jn 14:1–3, after Jesus said that he was going away to prepare a place for his disciples in the house of his Father, he promised, “I come again and I will receive you unto myself” (Jn 14:3). Now here in Rev 22:20, in his last word spoken before he *does* come again, he says to John, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Did this promise, upon reflection, remind this “disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn 21:20) of the word his Lord spoke to Peter about him in Jn 21:22, “If I wish him to remain until I come, what is that to you”? The aged John must have wondered often about that word. He knew that Jesus did not promise that he *would* remain on earth until the Lord came again, but *only that if the Lord wanted him to remain*, then he would remain (Jn 21:23). Now he who had lived so long as a witness to his Lord (cf. 1 Jn 1:1–4) hears this promise for the last time, “I am coming quickly” (Rev 22:20). (CC p. 657)

Amen, *Come, Lord Jesus*. See note on 1Co 16:22. (CSB)

These words may function as a liturgical response to the reading of this prophetic word (cf 1Co 16:22; *Did* 10:6). On that understanding, what followed the reading of this revealed word would be the Communion liturgy. (TLSB)

And what is John’s response? “Amen, come now, Lord Jesus” (ἀμήν, ἔρχου κύριε Ἰησοῦ, 22:20). The intent of this response is not to express the desire that the Lord should come *sometime*, but that he should “come *now*.” After all that John had seen and experienced and heard as he was given the message of Revelation, now sealed by the promise of his Lord’s impending return, he prays, “Come now, Lord Jesus.” He had followed Jesus in his earthly pilgrimage to the cross, and then to his resurrection and ascension. How many times John must have prayed for his Lord’s return! This disciple had been a faithful witness to his Lord over several decades since his Lord’s earthly ministry. Now at this very moment, following the beatific vision he had just seen in Revelation, he prays again, “Come now, Lord Jesus.” (CC p. 657)

This is also to be the prayer of every Christian individually, and of all Christians collectively, for it is the prayer of Christ’s bride, the church. This prayer is lifted up elsewhere too. Paul in 1 Cor 16:22 voices the Aramaic equivalent of this prayer, μαράνα θά, “maranatha,” “our Lord, come,” in his conclusion of that epistle. In the *Didache* (early second century A.D.), the Aramaic form of the prayer comes at the close of liturgical instructions for the Eucharist in a prayer that was to be part of the congregation’s Eucharistic celebration: “Let grace come and let this world pass away. ... If anyone is holy, let him come [to the Lord’s Supper]; if anyone is not [holy], let him repent. Maranatha [μαραναθα], amen” (*Didache* 10:6). (CC pp. 657-658)

The voicing of this prayer heavenward is the end result of the reading and hearing the message of Revelation—in fact of the whole Bible. With the eyes of faith focused on the revelatory unveiling of Jesus Christ (ἀποκάλυψις, 1:1; cf. 1 Cor 1:7; Gal 1:12; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Pet 1:13; 4:13) as presented and seen in Revelation, the church and each Christian are motivated to pray daily, “Amen, come *now*, Lord Jesus.” This then is to be done in firm confidence that the Lord Jesus will keep his promise, “Yes, I am coming quickly” (Rev 22:20). (CC p. 658)

22:21 A concluding benediction, similar to the ones appearing at the conclusion of NT Epistles (cf Php 4:23; 1Th 5:28). (TLSB)

Until that glorious day, the epiphany of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13), the closing benediction will sustain his church: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all” (Rev 22:21). That benediction highlights the truth that the Christian life is one of complete dependence upon God’s grace in Christ, and a life of hope in the glory that will be revealed at his return. It also is an evangelistic prayer, that the Lord’s grace may indeed come to “all”—all people—through the proclaimed Gospel. Hence this blessing of grace, which opens so many of the NT epistles (e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2) and so many sermons is a most fitting conclusion for this final book of Scripture: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all [of you].” (CC)

Excursus

Summary of the Christology of Revelation

In contrast to the Christology of the four gospels, that of Revelation presents Christ in glory. The gospels describe the life of Jesus on earth from his birth to his resurrection and ascension and thus present Christ in lowliness and humiliation, though their stories end with his entrance into his exalted glory. Where the gospels end, Revelation begins—at his ascension. It presents Christ in his state of exaltation (1:5, 13–20; 5:6–14) as Lord of lords and King of kings, from the time of his ascension until he comes again to judge the earth at the present world’s end and to usher in the new creation. (CC pp. 659-660)

The Christology of Revelation can be seen in the various roles Jesus Christ carries out in this prophetic message. He first appears to John in chapter 1 as the Son of Man (1:13). As such he is the mighty, exalted Lord of God’s creation who will bring all history to an end when he comes in judgment of the human race (14:14; 19:11–21). As the Son of Man, Christ will be the Lord of the new creation, the new heaven and earth (3:14) under the authority of the Father and together with the heavenly Father (21:5–6; 22:13) and the Holy Spirit (22:17). And because Jesus Christ is the Son of Man, all creation will bow before him (1:5–7, 17; 19:11–16; cf. Phil 2:9–11). (CC pp. 659-660)

In Revelation 5 Jesus Christ appears as the Lamb of God. Because of his victory by way of his death and resurrection, God’s people have been redeemed and

made into a kingdom for the heavenly Father (1:5–6; 5:10). It is by the blood of the Lamb that God’s people are made righteous and holy in his sight and are thus presented to him for eternal life (7:14–17; 22:14). Because the Lamb of God won the victory for God’s people over death and hell and over Satan, the dragon (12:5–12), Christ is honored and exalted as the Son of Man to rule all things in judgment and in life on behalf of the Father (5:6–14; 14:1–5, 14–20). (CC pp. 659-660)

Another role that the exalted Christ plays in Revelation is that of the angel of Yahweh, the spokesman and Word (λόγος) of God, for he is the mediator and witness of the message of Revelation.² While he himself does not appear in the guise of an angel (as did Yahweh in the OT, e.g., Ex 3:1–6; Judg 13:3–22), he fulfills such a role by the use of an angel who is arrayed in Christ’s own heavenly glory and who acts on Christ’s behalf, as vividly portrayed by the angel in Revelation 10. In such a role the Lord Christ presents himself to be “the angel of the covenant” (ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς διαθήκης, LXX Mal 3:1), who is the angel of Yahweh, the angel whom God promised to send to his people as prophesied in Mal 3:1. (CC pp. 659-660)

The high Christology of Revelation is brought to a climax and is comprehensively summarized in Rev 22:13, where the three divine titles describing the eternal magnitude of the infinite God are applied to Jesus Christ. He is “the First and the Last,” the Lord of the church; “the Beginning and the End” of all creation, and now also of the new creation; and “the Alpha and the Omega” of all eternity. Together with the Father, Jesus of Nazareth, born of a woman, is glorified and honored as God incarnate, through whom alone God deals with the human race in creation and in redemption, in judgment and in mercy. To him who reigns together with the Father and the Spirit be the glory, both now and forever, amen! (CC pp. 659-660)